

ROPE WILLIAM F  
79 BUENOS AIRES 573

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 00573 192156Z  
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9165  
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FOR ASST SECT VAXY

E.O. 12065: XDS-1 1-19-09 (CASTRO, RAUL H.) OR-M

TAGS: SHUM, AR

SUBJECT: (C) CLARIFICATION OF NUMBER OF DISAPPEARED PERSONS  
REF: BUENOS AIRES 0461

1. (C- ENTIRE TEXT)

2. WHEN IS USED THE FIGURE 55 PERSONS DISAPPEARING PER MONTH WITH GENERAL VIOLA I MEANT IT TO BE ILLUSTRATIVE AND I WAS GENEROUS. I WILL ADMIT, IN MY CALCULATIONS. THESE CALCULATIONS ARE BASED UPON: 1) THE NUMBER OF PERSONS ACTUALLY REPORTED TO THE EMBASSY TO HAVE DISAPPEARED; 2) AN ESTIMATED "TIME LAG" FACTOR -- THAT IS, WE ESTIMATE HIGHER FIGURES OF DISAPPEARANCES FOR RECENT MONTHS BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT TIME MUST PASS BEFORE REPORTS FINALLY REACH US FROM FAMILY MEMBERS (OFTEN VIA FAMILIES IN THE UNITED STATES, WHO SUBSEQUENTLY WRITE TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS OR HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS OUTSIDE ARGENTINA); AND 3) AN ESTIMATED "NOT REPORTED TO US" FACTOR -- I.E. WE ESTIMATE DISAPPEARANCES INVARIABLY HIGHER THAN THOSE ACTUALLY REPORTED TO THIS EMBASSY BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT ONLY A PERCENTAGE (WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT PERCENTAGE) ARE REPORTED TO US.

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 00573 192156Z

3. TO ELABORATE ON POINT TWO ABOVE: WHEN WE REPORTED NUMBERS OF DISAPPEARANCES IN NOVEMBER 1978 (BUENOS AIRES 9209) WE LISTED SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER DISAPPEARANCES REPORTED TO US AS THE TIME AS 22 AND 17. THESE NOW STAND AT 31 AND 23. AND THERE ALWAYS EXISTS THE POSSIBILITY OF COURSE THAT OTHERS WILL BE ADDED LATER.

4. WE REGRET THE "ELASTICITY" OF THIS KIND OF REPORTING, BUT THE FACT IS THAT WHEN WE REPORTED LATE AUGUST DISAPPEARANCES FOR THE YEAR IN PROGRESS (1978 BUENOS AIRES 6527) THE AVERAGE PER MONTH APPEARED TO STAND AT 23. WHEN IN NOVEMBER WE REPORTED JANUARY-OCTOBER DATA (1978 BUENOS AIRES 9209) THE AVERAGE STOOD AT 38.

5. TOTAL DISAPPEARANCES FOR 1978 PRESENTLY REPORTED TO THE EMBASSY STAND AT 450 -- WHICH WOULD APPEAR TO MAINTAIN THE LAST REPORTED AVERAGE OF 38 PER MONTH. DURING NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER HOWEVER ONLY 15 DISAPPEARANCES WERE REPORTED (8 IN NOVEMBER AND 7 IN

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PAGE

1

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DECEMBER). REALISTIC ESTIMATES MUST CONSIDER THE  
LIKELIHOOD OF SUBSEQUENT REPORTS. TO SPECULATE THEN  
THAT A FINAL AVERAGE MONTHLY FIGURE FOR DISAPPEARANCES  
IN 1978 WILL BE AT 38-42 DOES NOT, WE BELIEVE, STRETCH  
THE IMAGINATION-- NOR DOES IT SEEM THAT AN ADDITIONAL  
PROVISION FOR 13-17 UNREPORTED CASES IS LIKELY TO  
BE TOO FAR FROM REALITY.

6. FOR AS LONG AS WE CANNOT GET PRECISE STATISTICS--  
AND WE HAVE NO IDEA THAT THIS WILL EVER BE POSSIBLE--  
OUR ESTIMATES MAY APPEAR TO ERR ON THE SIDE OF HIGH  
NUMBERS, EVEN THOUGH WE WILL DEFEND THESE ESTIMATES

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PAGE 03 BUENOS 00573 192156Z

AS THE BEST AVAILABLE IN A VIRTUALLY INSCRUTABLE  
SITUATION. EVEN WHEN WE USE ESTIMATES THAT ARE ON  
THE HIGH SIDE. HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS, WHO USE DATA  
THAT WE BELIEVE ARE OFTEN LESS SOLID THAN OUR OWN, MAKE CHARGES THAT  
WE ARE NOT AWARE OF THE DEPTH OF THE DISAPPEARANCES  
PROBLEM HERE.

CASTRO

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1

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